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**NOTICE OF PREPARATION**

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**FROM:** Mehdi Morshed  
Executive Director  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, California 95814

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Project Level Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Palmdale to Los Angeles section of the California High-Speed Train System

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), as the Lead Agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for a proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) system, is issuing this Notice of Preparation of a Project Level EIR/EIS for the section of the HST system from the City of Palmdale to the City of Los Angeles.

The Authority is issuing this notice to solicit public and agency input into the development of the scope of the EIR and to advise the public that outreach activities will be conducted by the Authority and its representatives in the preparation of the combined EIR/EIS. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), an operating administration within the United States Department of Transportation, will serve as federal lead agency for the federal environmental review process complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of railroad operations, including the safety of any proposed high-speed train system. The FRA will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* announcing the agency's intention to initiate the federal environmental review process for this section of the HST project.

The Authority and FRA completed a Program EIR/EIS for the California HST System in 2005 as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed California HST System. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR and issued a decision, and FRA issued a Record of Decision in November 2005 on the Final Program EIS, selecting the HST Alternative for further project level environmental review and selecting corridor alignments and potential station locations, including a corridor between Palmdale and Los Angeles. This project level Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will be developed as a second-tier environmental document. Studies will include preliminary engineering designs and assessment of environmental effects associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the HST system, including track, ancillary facilities and stations, along the previously selected Palmdale-Los Angeles corridor.

**DATES:** Written comments on the scope of the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS should be provided to the Authority at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. Public scoping meetings are scheduled from April 4-17, 2007 as noted below.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the scope should be sent to Ms. Carrie Pourvahidi, Deputy Director, ATTN. Palmdale-Los Angeles, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L Street, Suite 1425, Sacramento CA 95814, or via email with subject line "Palmdale-Los Angeles" to: [comments@hsr.ca.gov](mailto:comments@hsr.ca.gov). Comments may also be provided orally or in writing at the scoping meetings.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Carrie Pourvahidi at the above noted address.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning for the development of a proposed statewide HST network that is fully coordinated with other public transportation services. The Legislature has granted the Authority the powers necessary to oversee the construction and operation of a statewide HST network once financing is secured. As part of the Authority's efforts to implement a high-speed train system, the Authority adopted a Final Business Plan in June 2000, which reviewed the economic feasibility of a 700-mile-long HST system capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour on a dedicated, fully grade-separated state-of-the-art track.

In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed a Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (statewide program EIR/EIS), as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR under CEQA and approved the proposed HST System, and FRA issued a Record of Decision under NEPA on the Final Program EIS. This statewide program EIR/EIS established the purpose and need for the HST system, analyzed a HST alternative, and compared it with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. In approving the statewide program EIR/EIS, the Authority and the FRA selected the HST Alternative and selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST system at the site-specific project level of environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.

The Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will be one of a number of second-tier environmental reviews for sections of the HST system that FRA and the Authority intend to undertake. It will be tiered from and incorporate by reference the certified statewide program EIR/EIS in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR § 1508.28) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. § 15168[b]). Tiering will ensure that the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS builds upon all previous work prepared for and incorporated in the statewide program EIR/EIS. The EIR/EIS will be carried out in accordance with FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 Fed. Reg. 28545 [May 26, 1999]) and will address NEPA and CEQA, and will also continue the NEPA/Clean Water Act Section 404 merger process established through the statewide program EIR/EIS process.

This Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS and other project level EIR/EISs will examine a range of project alternatives for portions of the proposed HST system within corridors selected in the statewide program EIR/EIS, as well as a no action alternative. This and other project level EIR/EISs will describe site-specific environmental impacts, will identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts and will incorporate design practices to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The FRA and the Authority will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of proposed site-specific projects to determine whether the impacts are potentially significant and whether impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This and other project EIR/EISs will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, and evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the HST system. Information and documents regarding this HST environmental review process will be made available through the Authority's Internet site: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.gov/>.

**Project Objectives/Purpose and Need:** The need for a high-speed train (HST) system is directly related to the expected growth in population and increase in intercity travel demand in California over the next twenty years and beyond. With growth in travel demand, there will be an increase in travel delays arising from the growing congestion on California's highways and at airports. In addition, there will be negative effects on the economy, quality of life, and air quality in and around California's metropolitan areas from a transportation system that will become less reliable as travel demand increases. The intercity highway system, commercial airports, and conventional passenger rail serving the intercity travel market are currently operating at or near capacity, and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion to meet existing demand and future growth. The purpose of the proposed HST system is to provide a new mode of high-speed intercity travel that would link the major metropolitan areas of the state; interface with international airports, mass transit, and highways; and provide added capacity to meet increases in intercity travel demand in California in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources.

**Alternatives:** The Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and HST Alternatives for the Palmdale to Los Angeles corridor.

**No Action Alternative:** The take no action (No Project or No Build) alternative is defined to serve as the baseline for assessment of the HST Alternative. The No Build Alternative represents the region's transportation system (highway, air, and conventional rail) as it existed in 2006, and as it would exist after completion of programs or projects currently planned for funding and implementation by 2030. The No Build Alternative defines the existing and future intercity transportation system for the Palmdale to Los Angeles corridor based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system through 2030, according to the following sources of information: State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel, airport plans, and intercity passenger rail plans.

**HST Alternative:** The Authority proposes to construct, operate and maintain an electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system, over 700-mile long (1,126-kilometer long), capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour (mph) (320 kilometers per hour [km/h]) on dedicated, fully grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. The Palmdale to Los Angeles HST corridor that was selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS follows SR-58/Soledad Canyon from the City of Palmdale to Sylmar and then along the Metrolink Railroad line to Los Angeles Union Station. The corridor is relatively wide in the area that includes both SR-14 and Union Pacific Railroad alignments between the Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita. Further engineering studies to be undertaken as a part of this EIR/EIS process will examine and refine alignments in the selected corridor, including sections from the Palmdale to Santa Clarita and from the Burbank Metrolink Station to Los Angeles Union Station. An alignment option that closely follows SR-14 through Soledad Canyon will be considered as well as an alignment option through Soledad Canyon along the Santa Clara River. Alignments along San Fernando Road adjacent to Taylor Yard and along the existing Metrolink right-of-way around the Taylor Yard area will be considered. See Attachments A and B for maps of the HST system and the Palmdale to Los Angeles section of the HST system.

Station location options were selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS considering travel time, train speed, cost, local access times, potential connections with other modes of transportation, ridership potential and the distribution of population and major destinations along the route, and local planning constraints/conditions. Alternative station sites at the selected general station locations will be identified and evaluated in this project level EIR/EIS. Station area development policies to encourage transit-friendly development near and around HST stations that would have the potential to promote higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development around the stations will be prepared in coordination with local and regional planning agencies. Potential station locations to be evaluated in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS include: City of Palmdale, Palmdale Transportation Center; City of Sylmar, Sylmar Metrolink station; and City of Burbank, Burbank Metrolink station. The HST station at Los Angeles Union Station is being evaluated in the project level Los Angeles-Orange HST EIR/EIS and will not be considered in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS process. In addition, potential sites for turnback/layover train storage facilities and a main HST repair and heavy maintenance facility will be evaluated in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS.

**Probable Effects:** The purpose of the EIR/EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FRA and the Authority will continue the tiered evaluation of all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the HST system. Impact areas to be addressed include: transportation impacts; safety and security; land use, and zoning; secondary development; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration, energy, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

**Scoping and Comments:** The Authority encourages broad participation in the EIR/EIS process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. In particular, the Authority is interested in determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant

impacts identifiable at a project level. In response to this NOP public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise FRA and the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public scoping meetings have been scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and Federal environmental review. The scoping meetings described in this Notice will be advertised locally and included in additional public notification. Scoping meetings are scheduled for the following cities:

- **Glendale Public Library**, 222 E. Harvard St., Glendale, CA 91205 on April 4, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM for public agencies and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the general public.
- **Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority Headquarters (Board Room)**, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012 on April 5, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM for public agencies and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the general public.
- **Sylmar Park Recreation Center**, 13109 Borden Avenue Sylmar, CA 91342 on April 10, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM for public agencies and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the general public.
- **Palmdale City Hall, Council Chambers**, 38300 North Sierra Highway, Palmdale, CA 93550 on April 12, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM for public agencies and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the general public.
- **Los Angeles River Center & Gardens (Atrium)**, 570 W. Avenue 26, Los Angeles, CA 90065 on April 17, 2007, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM for public agencies and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the general public.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, public agencies are requested to send their responses to this Notice of Preparation to the Authority at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response and direct any comments or questions regarding this project to Ms. Carrie Pourvahidi, Deputy Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority at the address shown above.

Date:

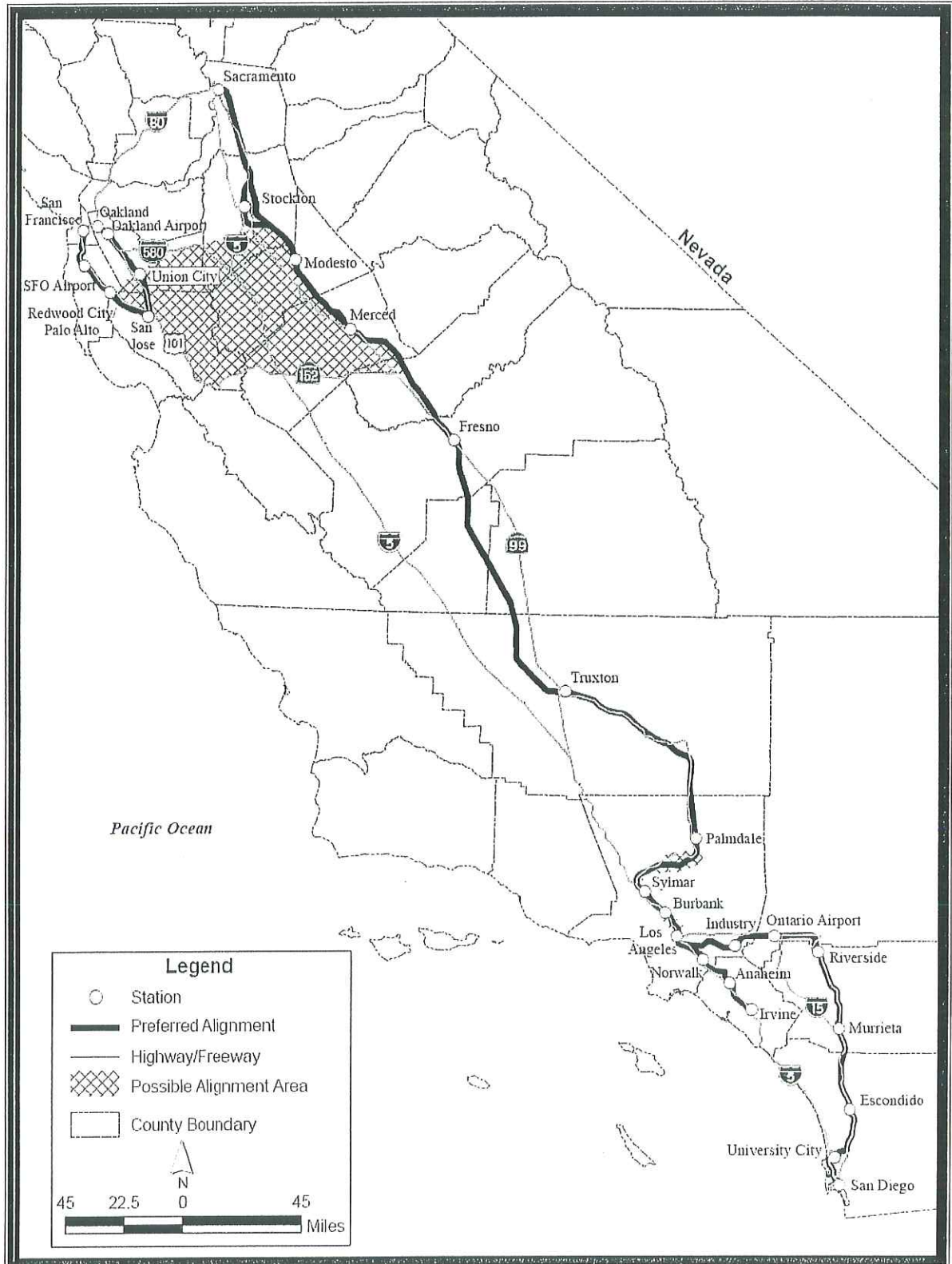
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Signature:



Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director

# **Attachment A** **State-wide High-speed Train System** **Preferred Alignments and Stations Statewide**



**Attachment B**  
**Palmdale/Los Angeles Segment**

